

Message Text

SECRET

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41

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1013

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STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, SA, US

SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE SAUDI ARABIA F-4 AIRCRAFT

REF JIDDA STADIS 2787

SUMMARY: DURING VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA APRIL 13-17, DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS AND CJCS GENERAL BROWN PROPOSED TO THE SAG THAT THE US DEPLOY A SMALL F-4 SQUADRON TO PREPARE SAUDI PILOTS AND GROUND PERSONNEL TO RECEIVE THE F-15 OR F-16 FIGHTER IN ABOUT 1980. THE OFFER WAS RECEIVED WITH INTEREST AND A DETAILED PROPOSAL IS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE SAUDI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION WITHIN A MONTH. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA APRIL 13-17, DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS AND CJCS GENERAL BROWN PROPOSED TO SAG THAT THE US STATION F-4E PHANTOM AIRCRAFT IN SAUDI ARABIA TO PREPARE THE SAUDI AIR FORCE TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN MORE ADVANCED AIRCRAFT, SUCH AS THE F-15 OR F-16.

2. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH PRINCES FAHD AND SULTAN, THE SECRETARY SUGGESTED THAT A US AIR FORCE F-4 SQUADRON OF 10-12 AIRCRAFT BE STATIONED AT DHAHRAN, WITH A FULL COMPLEMENT OF PERSONNEL, AUGMENTED BY INSTRUCTORS IN ALL ASPECTS OF SQUADRON OPERATIONS. THE AIRCRAFT WOULD REMAIN UNDER USAF CONTROL FOR THE ANTICIPATED THREE TO FIVE

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YEARS REQUIRED FOR TRAINING THE SAUDIS. AT THE END OF THAT PERIOD,

IN ABOUT 1980, THE SAUDIS COULD BUY F-15S OR F-16S, KEEP THE F-4 AIRCRAFT ALREADY THERE, OR BUY NEW F-4S. THE SECRETARY SUGGESTED THAT THE BEST SOLUTION MIGHT BE TO BUY THE SQUADRON'S F-4S, WHICH WOULD STILL HAVE A USEFUL LIFE OF ABOUT 10 YEARS, THEN LATER ON PURCHASE A MORE ADVANCED FIGHTER FOR USE UNTIL ABOUT THE YEAR 2000.

3. PILOTS NOW TRAINED ON THE BRITISH LIGHTNING WOULD BE TRANSITIONED INTO THE F-4, WITH THE BRITISH CONTINUING TO TRAIN NEW PILOTS FOR THE LIGHTNINGS. THE F-5 PROGRAM WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD BROADEN THE BASE OF TRAINED GROUND PERSONNEL, AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PILOTS AVAILABLE TO THE SAUDI AIR FORCE, AS WELL AS UPGRADE THEIR SKILL LEVELS TO HANDLE THE F-15 OR F-16.

4. THE SECRETARY EMPHASIZED THAT SPEED AND SECRECY ARE ESSENTIAL IN REACHING AGREEMENT ON THE PROGRAM, SINCE ANY LEAKS IN THE PRESS WOULD PROBABLY KILL IT. GENERAL BROWN SAID HE COULD HAVE A DETAILED PROPOSAL IN SAUDI HANDS WITHIN A MONTH, AND THE SQUADRON ON THE GROUND AT DHAHRAN WITHIN A WEEK AFTER THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED. BARE BASE KITS (TENTS AND PRE-FABRICATED BUILDINGS) COULD BE USED UNTIL PROPER FACILITIES WERE BUILT TO HOUSE THE SQUADRON.

5. SECRETARY CLEMENTS SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THE PROPOSAL WITH SECDEF SCHLESINGER AND THAT IT HAD BEEN RAISED WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THE PRESIDENT. SECRETARY KISSINGER MENTIONED THE PROPOSAL TO SAG DURING HIS LAST VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, BUT HAD NOT DEALT WITH IT IN DETAIL.

6. PRINCE FAHD AND PRINCE SULTAN RECEIVED THE CONCEPT WITH INTEREST AND REQUESTED A WRITTEN PROPOSAL FOR THEIR STUDY. THE PROPOSAL WAS PROMISED WITHIN A MONTH.

7. SECRETARY CLEMENTS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR, BUT NOT REPEAT NOT THE SAUDIS, THAT THIS WOULD REQUIRE THE STATIONING IN SAUDI ARABIA OF ABOUT 3000 REPEAT 3000 ADDITIONAL MILITARY PERSONNEL - TRAINERS, MECHANICS, SUPPORT TROOPS. WITH FAMILIES THIS WOULD BRING THE TOTAL TO WELL OVER 5000.
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